The Black Cat

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The Mysterious Card, Cleveland Moffett.
Tang-u, Lawrence E. Adams.
The Little Brown Mole, Clarice Irene Clinghan.
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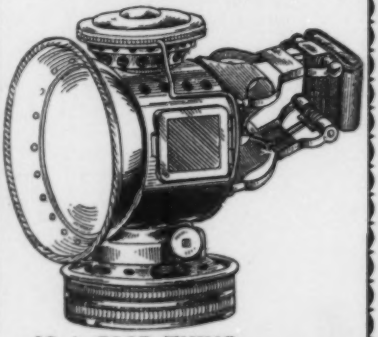

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The Mysterious Card.

BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

RICHARD BURWELL, of New York, will never cease to regret that the French language was not made a part of his education.

This is why:

On the second evening after Burwell arrived in Paris, feeling lonely without his wife and daughter, who were still visiting a friend in London, his mind naturally turned to the theater. So, after consulting the daily amusement calendar, he decided to visit the *Folies Bergère*, which he had heard of as one of the notable sights. During an intermission he went into the beautiful garden, where gay crowds were strolling among the flowers, and lights, and fountains. He had just seated himself at a little three-legged table, with a view to enjoying the novel scene, when his attention was attracted by a lovely woman, gowned strikingly, though in perfect taste, who passed near him, leaning on the arm of a gentleman. The only thing that he noticed about this gentleman was that he wore eyeglasses.

Now Burwell had never posed as a captivator of the fair sex, and could scarcely credit his eyes when the lady left the side of her escort and, turning back as if she had forgotten something, passed close by him, and deftly placed a card on his table. The

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card bore some French words written in purple ink, but, not knowing that language, he was unable to make out their meaning. The lady paid no further heed to him, but, rejoining the gentleman with the eye-glasses, swept out of the place with the grace and dignity of a princess. Burwell remained staring at the card.

Needless to say, he thought no more of the performance or of the other attractions about him. Everything seemed flat and tawdry compared with the radiant vision that had appeared and disappeared so mysteriously. His one desire now was to discover the meaning of the words written on the card.

Calling a fiacre, he drove to the Hotel Continental, where he was staying. Proceeding directly to the office and taking the manager aside, Burwell asked if he would be kind enough to translate a few words of French into English. There were no more than twenty words in all.

"Why, certainly," said the manager, with French politeness, and cast his eyes over the card. As he read, his face grew rigid with astonishment, and, looking at his questioner sharply, he exclaimed: "Where did you get this, monsieur?"

Burwell started to explain, but was interrupted by: "That will do, that will do. You must leave the hotel."

"What do you mean?" asked the man from New York, in amazement.

"You must leave the hotel now — to-night — without fail," commanded the manager excitedly.

Now it was Burwell's turn to grow angry, and he declared heatedly that if he wasn't wanted in this hotel there were plenty of others in Paris where he would be welcome. And, with an assumption of dignity, but piqued at heart, he settled his bill, sent for his belongings, and drove up the Rue de la Paix to the Hotel Bellevue, where he spent the night.

The next morning he met the proprietor, who seemed to be a good fellow, and, being inclined now to view the incident of the previous evening from its ridiculous side, Burwell explained what had befallen him, and was pleased to find a sympathetic listener.

"Why, the man was a fool," declared the proprietor. "Let me see the card; I will tell you what it means." But as he read, his face and manner changed instantly.

"This is a serious matter," he said sternly. "Now I understand why my confrère refused to entertain you. I regret, monsieur, but I shall be obliged to do as he did."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that you cannot remain here."

With that he turned on his heel, and the indignant guest could not prevail upon him to give any explanation.

"We'll see about this," said Burwell, thoroughly angered.

It was now nearly noon, and the New Yorker remembered an engagement to lunch with a friend from Boston, who, with his family, was stopping at the Hotel de l'Alma. With his luggage on the carriage, he ordered the *cocher* to drive directly there, determined to take counsel with his countryman before selecting new quarters. His friend was highly indignant when he heard the story — a fact that gave Burwell no little comfort, knowing, as he did, that the man was accustomed to foreign ways from long residence abroad.

"It is some silly mistake, my dear fellow; I wouldn't pay any attention to it. Just have your luggage taken down and stay here. It is a nice, homelike place, and it will be very jolly, all being together. But, first, let me prepare a little 'nerve settler' for you."

After the two had lingered a moment over their Manhattan cocktails, Burwell's friend excused himself to call the ladies. He had proceeded only two or three steps when he turned, and said: "Let's see that mysterious card that has raised all this row."

He had scarcely withdrawn it from Burwell's hand when he started back, and exclaimed: —

"Great God, man! Do you mean to say — this is simply —"

Then, with a sudden movement of his hand to his head, he left the room.

He was gone perhaps five minutes, and when he returned his face was white.

"I am awfully sorry," he said nervously; "but the ladies tell me they — that is, my wife — she has a frightful headache. You will have to excuse us from the lunch."

Instantly realizing that this was only a flimsy pretense, and deeply hurt by his friend's behavior, the mystified man arose at

once and left without another word. He was now determined to solve this mystery at any cost. What could be the meaning of the words on that infernal piece of pasteboard?

Profiting by his humiliating experiences, he took good care not to show the card to any one at the hotel where he now established himself, — a comfortable little place near the Grand Opera House.

All through the afternoon he thought of nothing but the card, and turned over in his mind various ways of learning its meaning without getting himself into further trouble. That evening he went again to the *Folies Bergère* in the hope of finding the mysterious woman, for he was now more than ever anxious to discover who she was. It even occurred to him that she might be one of those beautiful Nihilist conspirators, or, perhaps, a Russian spy, such as he had read of in novels. But he failed to find her, either then or on the three subsequent evenings which he passed in the same place. Meanwhile the card was burning in his pocket like a hot coal. He dreaded the thought of meeting any one that he knew, while this horrible cloud hung over him. He bought a French-English dictionary and tried to pick out the meaning word by word, but failed. It was all Greek to him. For the first time in his life, Burwell regretted that he had not studied French at college.

After various vain attempts to either solve or forget the torturing riddle, he saw no other course than to lay the problem before a detective agency. He accordingly put his case in the hands of an *agent de la sureté* who was recommended as a competent and trustworthy man. They had a talk together in a private room, and, of course, Burwell showed the card. To his relief, his adviser at least showed no sign of taking offense. Only he did not and would not explain what the words meant.

"It is better," he said, "that monsieur should not know the nature of this document for the present. I will do myself the honor to call upon monsieur to-morrow at his hotel, and then monsieur shall know everything."

"Then it is really serious?" asked the unfortunate man.

"Very serious," was the answer.

The next twenty-four hours Burwell passed in a fever of

anxiety. As his mind conjured up one fearful possibility after another he deeply regretted that he had not torn up the miserable card at the start. He even seized it, — prepared to strip it into fragments, and so end the whole affair. And then his Yankee stubbornness again asserted itself, and he determined to see the thing out, come what might.

"After all," he reasoned, "it is no crime for a man to pick up a card that a lady drops on his table."

Crime or no crime, however, it looked very much as if he had committed some grave offense when, the next day, his detective drove up in a carriage, accompanied by a uniformed official, and requested the astounded American to accompany them to the police headquarters.

"What for?" he asked.

"It is only a formality," said the detective; and when Burwell still protested the man in uniform remarked: "You'd better come quietly, monsieur; you will have to come, anyway."

An hour later, after severe cross-examination by another official, who demanded many facts about the New Yorker's age, place of birth, residence, occupation, etc., the bewildered man found himself in the Conciergerie prison. Why he was there or what was about to befall him Burwell had no means of knowing; but before the day was over he succeeded in having a message sent to the American Legation, where he demanded immediate protection as a citizen of the United States. It was not until evening, however, that the Secretary of Legation, a consequential person, called at the prison. There followed a stormy interview, in which the prisoner used some strong language, the French officers gesticulated violently and talked very fast, and the Secretary calmly listened to both sides, said little, and smoked a good cigar.

"I will lay your case before the American minister," he said as he rose to go, "and let you know the result to-morrow."

"But this is an outrage. Do you mean to say —" Before he could finish, however, the Secretary, with a strangely suspicious glance, turned and left the room.

That night Burwell slept in a cell.

The next morning he received another visit from the non-

committal Secretary, who informed him that matters had been arranged, and that he would be set at liberty forthwith.

"I must tell you, though," he said, "that I have had great difficulty in accomplishing this, and your liberty is granted only on condition that you leave the country within twenty-four hours, and never under any conditions return."

Burwell stormed, raged, and pleaded; but it availed nothing. The Secretary was inexorable, and yet he positively refused to throw any light upon the causes of this monstrous injustice.

"Here is your card," he said, handing him a large envelope closed with the seal of Legation. "I advise you to burn it and never refer to the matter again."

That night the ill-fated man took the train for London, his heart consumed by hatred for the whole French nation, together with a burning desire for vengeance. He wired his wife to meet him at the station, and for a long time debated with himself whether he should at once tell her the sickening truth. In the end he decided that it was better to keep silent. No sooner, however, had she seen him than her woman's instinct told her that he was laboring under some mental strain. And he saw in a moment that to withhold from her his burning secret was impossible, especially when she began to talk of the trip they had planned through France. Of course no trivial reason would satisfy her for his refusal to make this trip, since they had been looking forward to it for years; and yet it was impossible now for him to set foot on French soil.

So he finally told her the whole story, she laughing and weeping in turn. To her, as to him, it seemed incredible that such overwhelming disasters could have grown out of so small a cause, and, being a fluent French scholar, she demanded a sight of the fatal piece of pasteboard. In vain her husband tried to divert her by proposing a trip through Italy. She would consent to nothing until she had seen the mysterious card which Burwell was now convinced he ought long ago to have destroyed. After refusing for awhile to let her see it, he finally yielded. But, although he had learned to dread the consequences of showing that cursed card, he was little prepared for what followed. She read it, turned pale, gasped for breath, and nearly fell to the floor.

"I told you not to read it," he said; and then, growing tender at the sight of her distress, he took her hand in his and begged her to be calm. "At least tell me what the thing means," he said. "We can bear it together; you surely can trust me."

But she, as if stung by rage, pushed him from her and declared, in a tone such as he had never heard from her before, that never, never again would she live with him. "You are a monster!" she exclaimed. And those were the last words he heard from her lips.

Failing utterly in all efforts at reconciliation, the half-crazed man took the first steamer for New York, having suffered in scarcely a fortnight more than in all his previous life. His whole pleasure trip had been ruined, he had failed to consummate important business arrangements, and now he saw his home broken up and his happiness ruined. During the voyage he scarcely left his stateroom, but lay there prostrated with agony. In this black despondency the one thing that sustained him was the thought of meeting his partner, Jack Evelyth, the friend of his boyhood, the sharer of his success, the bravest, most loyal fellow in the world. In the face of even the most damning circumstances, he felt that Evelyth's rugged common sense would evolve some way of escape from this hideous nightmare. Upon landing at New York he hardly waited for the gang-plank to be lowered before he rushed on shore and grasped the hand of his partner, who was waiting on the wharf.

"Jack," was his first word, "I am in dreadful trouble, and you are the only man in the world who can help me."

An hour later Burwell sat at his friend's dinner table, talking over the situation.

Evelyth was all kindness, and several times as he listened to Burwell's story his eyes filled with tears.

"It does not seem possible, Richard," he said, "that such things can be; but I will stand by you; we will fight it out together. But we cannot strike in the dark. Let me see this card."

"There is the damned thing," Burwell said, throwing it on the table.

Evelyth opened the envelope, took out the card, and fixed his eyes on the sprawling purple characters.

"Can you read it?" Burwell asked excitedly.

"Perfectly," his partner said. The next moment he turned pale, and his voice broke. Then he clasped the tortured man's hand in his with a strong grip. "Richard," he said slowly, "if my only child had been brought here dead it would not have caused me more sorrow than this does. You have brought me the worst news one man could bring another."

His agitation and genuine suffering affected Burwell like a death sentence.

"Speak, man," he cried; "do not spare me. I can bear anything rather than this awful uncertainty. Tell me what the card means."

Evelyth took a swallow of brandy and sat with head bent on his clasped hands.

"No, I can't do it; there are some things a man must not do."

Then he was silent again, his brows knitted. Finally he said solemnly: —

"No, I can't see any other way out of it. We have been true to each other all our lives; we have worked together and looked forward to never separating. I would rather fail and die than see this happen. But we have got to separate, old friend; we have got to separate."

They sat there talking until late into the night. But nothing that Burwell could do or say availed against his friend's decision. There was nothing for it but that Evelyth should buy his partner's share of the business or that Burwell buy out the other. The man was more than fair in the financial proposition he made; he was generous, as he always had been, but his determination was inflexible; the two must separate. And they did.

With his old partner's desertion, it seemed to Burwell that the world was leagued against him. It was only three weeks from the day on which he had received the mysterious card; yet in that time he had lost all that he valued in the world,— wife, friends, and business. What next to do with the fatal card was the sickening problem that now possessed him.

He dared not show it; yet he dared not destroy it. He loathed it; yet he could not let it go from his possession. Upon returning to his house he locked the accursed thing away in his safe as if it had been a package of dynamite or a bottle of deadly poison.

Yet not a day passed that he did not open the drawer where the thing was kept and scan with loathing the mysterious purple scrawl.

In desperation he finally made up his mind to take up the study of the language in which the hateful thing was written. And still he dreaded the approach of the day when he should decipher its awful meaning.

One afternoon, less than a week after his arrival in New York, as he was crossing Twenty-third Street on the way to his French teacher, he saw a carriage rolling up Broadway. In the carriage was a face that caught his attention like a flash. As he looked again he recognized the woman who had been the cause of his undoing. Instantly he sprang into another cab and ordered the driver to follow after. He found the house where she was living. He called there several times; but always received the same reply, that she was too much engaged to see any one. Next he was told that she was ill, and on the following day the servant said she was much worse. Three physicians had been summoned in consultation. He sought out one of these and told him it was a matter of life or death that he see this woman. The doctor was a kindly man and promised to assist him. Through his influence, it came about that on that very night Burwell stood by the bedside of this mysterious woman. She was beautiful still, though her face was worn with illness.

"Do you recognize me?" he asked tremblingly, as he leaned over the bed, clutching in one hand an envelope containing the mysterious card. "Do you remember seeing me at the *Folies Bergère* a month ago?"

"Yes," she murmured, after a moment's study of his face; and he noted with relief that she spoke English.

"Then, for God's sake, tell me, what does it all mean?" he gasped, quivering with excitement.

"I gave you the card because I wanted you to — to — "

Here a terrible spasm of coughing shook her whole body, and she fell back exhausted.

An agonizing despair tugged at Burwell's heart. Frantically snatching the card from its envelope, he held it close to the woman's face.

"Tell me! Tell me!"

With a supreme effort, the pale figure slowly raised itself on the pillow, its fingers clutching at the counterpane.

Then the sunken eyes fluttered — forced themselves open — and stared in stony amazement upon the fatal card, while the trembling lips moved noiselessly, as if in an attempt to speak. As Burwell, choking with eagerness, bent his head slowly to hers, a suggestion of a smile flickered across the woman's face. Again the mouth quivered, the man's head bent nearer and nearer to hers, his eyes riveted upon the lips. Then, as if to aid her in deciphering the mystery, he turned his eyes to the card.

With a cry of horror he sprang to his feet, his eyeballs starting from their sockets. Almost at the same moment the woman fell heavily upon the pillow.

Every vestige of the writing had faded! The card was blank! The woman lay there dead.

Tang-u.

BY LAWRENCE E. ADAMS.

MONG the most interesting souvenirs that Marston, the naval officer, brought from the Orient was a curious portrait, evidently the work of a native artist, painted in brilliant colors on a panel of foreign wood. More striking than the workmanship of the portrait, however, was its subject, a small Chinese boy, apparently not more than ten or twelve years of age, but wearing the uniform of a high Japanese naval officer, and adorned with a whole string of jeweled decorations.

Here is the history of the portrait:

When the Japanese flagship steamed out of the harbor of Canton on the day that war was formally declared between Japan and China, it carried one human being whose name was not on the ship's rolls, — and he belonged to the enemy. He became a passenger under the following circumstances: Just before the ship weighed anchor a small steam launch was sent back for the commander and superior officers, who had been detained until late. Among these officers were three Americans, all graduates of the Annapolis academy, who had been engaged by the Japanese government as advisers during the coming hostilities. As the little launch wormed its way through the maze of picturesque craft and sampans, — the curious little Chinese house-boats, — which crowded the bay, the eyes of the American officers were riveted by a curious sight. To the top of a wooden stake to which a sampan was moored a little Chinese boy clung, swaying to and fro, eyeing delightedly the steam launch as it shot through the water. In his anxiety to see the fun, however, he had disregarded the weakness of this reedlike support, which, when a passing sampan collided with it, suddenly broke off short, plunging the little chap into the water. At first the launch's

passengers paid slight attention to the accident, knowing that these little natives are as much at home in the water as on shore. Indifference, however, gave way to concern when the child's shrill cry for help rang through the air, followed by the mad efforts of every sampan-man within sight to get away from the drowning boy, instead of to him. It was now evident that the little fellow had become entangled in a floating coil of rope, and that his drowning was a matter of a few seconds; yet not one of the Chinese boatmen but watched from a distance and in silence the small hero's frantic struggles for life. Indeed, the little Mongolian was already disappearing in the waters of the bay when the steam launch, at the signal of the commander, veered in its course, and a strong arm snatched the little body from the waves. As for the sampan-men, they watched the rescue with cries of amazement. This was because of the curious law existing in certain provinces of China that whosoever saves a life, the rescued one may lawfully look to the rescuer for support forever after. It is plain that this barbaric edict virtually puts a premium on death; but the explanation lies in the fatalistic religion, which holds that whenever a man falls into peril it is by the express wish and will of the gods, and that to rescue him is to obstruct their just decrees.

Meantime the officers, who had arrived on shipboard with their protégé before it had occurred to them to plan for his disposal, were examining their find as though he had been a new and curious toy. To send him back to shore was impossible, as they were already steaming out of the harbor. The only course, then, was to keep him on board, at least during the voyage to Japan, a plan rendered all the easier by the fact that the little heathen was, according to his broken Japanese, both homeless and friendless.

But if the boy had seemed a nuisance in prospect, he was anything but that in reality. Shrewd as any Bowery ragamuffin, the little fellow's alert ways and quick wits were the unfailing delight of the three American officers. More imitative, even, than the Japanese, he picked up their language and customs with such incredible ease that in a few days he was more Japanese than any subject of the Mikado. Indeed, before many weeks had passed,

the entire crew was accustomed to the curious spectacle of one of the enemy enjoying the most marked attention and hospitality that the ship could afford.

But, besides his imitativeness and shrewdness, the little Mongolian had one accomplishment that gained the awe-struck admiration of his Oriental friends. That was the power of discovering objects at incredible distances as easily by night as by day, a power due partly to inheritance, and partly to his profession. The lad was an interesting specimen of the Oriental class of beings known as rat-catchers. This means more than the word implies. They are not rat-catchers by vocation alone, but, strangely enough, they are born to the trade. In addition to many other talents which he had inherited from a long line of rat-catching ancestry, little Tang-u,—the "rat,"—as the boy was called, had the power of seeing his way clearly in almost the dead blackness of night. Sometimes, indeed, it seemed as though he was endowed with a sixth sense in this matter, being able to walk straight into a dungeon-like room and to bring forth any object without the least hesitancy. Courage, also, he had developed to a rare degree, for the rats in the docks of China, and in the underground passages from warehouse cellar to cellar, and sewer to sewer, where he plied his trade, are the fattest and most savage of the rodent tribe the world over; so large, indeed, that the skins of two of them will make a pair of gloves, and the carcass will supply a family with dried *fillet de rodent* for a week. These rat-catchers spend days and weeks in the underground passages, and day and night are almost the same to them.

Now that he could no longer exercise his strange gift in his accustomed way, Tang-u would often amuse himself by standing for hours on the deck, peering out through the mist or the darkness in search of things hidden to common eyes. Indeed, among the Americans he soon became known as the "kid with the telescopic eye," while the commander, on various occasions, allowed him to accompany the men in the lookout, where he discovered objects often in advance of the field-glass. Even the dark waters of the ocean were not proof against the vision of the little heathen, whose bright eyes would detect curious fish as they swam around the ship, many feet below the surface; while a fog that blinded

the ordinary eye proved no obstacle to his keen sight. Before long every one came to the conclusion that a boy whose eye was equal to a combined field-glass and search-light was a valuable addition to a modern warship; and on more than one occasion during the months of the war the little Chinaman's discernment was appealed to as gravely as though he had been thirty years old and a Japanese officer, instead of a ten-year-old Chinaman.

On one occasion, indeed, Tang-u's sixth sense made him for five minutes the ship's commander.

It was late in the evening before the memorable engagement of Port Arthur. The flagship, which, having passed unscathed through months of war, had been recently ordered to this stronghold, had just anchored in the harbor, and preparations were making for the night's defense. The torpedo net had not yet been lowered, but the whole ship resounded with the bustle and hurry of preparations for what every one felt would be the most decisive battle of the war. Meantime Tang-u stood alone near the bow, peering out through the darkness, as was his custom upon arriving in a strange place, in search of some new and interesting sight. Suddenly, above the confusion, there rang out a shrill little scream, and Tang-u, with his eyes bulging from his head, rushed towards the admiral, and, pointing out to sea, frantically shrieked: "Tor-pee-to! tor-pee-to!!"

Instantly every eye followed the direction of the tiny finger. The sea looked unruffled. Not a soul on the deck, even by straining his vision to the utmost, could verify Tang-u's cry. Yet so accustomed had they become to relying upon the little fellow's keen sight that the admiral gave instant orders to lower the net. In a moment there was a sound of hurrying feet, a hundred hands were raised to the ropes, and the great net fell into place. Before the splash of the falling net had died away, there was a thundering explosion, and a tremendous upheaval of water, like that of a mighty geyser, shook the huge ship from bow to stern. It was indeed a torpedo that Tang-u's keen eyes had detected far away through the approaching night. But swiftly as it came, the boy's marvelous vision had been swifter. The well-aimed missile of destruction, that in a moment more would have destroyed the flower of the Japanese navy, had, in coming in contact with the

netting, exploded harmlessly, flooding the deck with water. The great warship with over three hundred souls had been saved from annihilation, — and by one of the enemy.

A few months later, when Tang-u's exploit was brought to the notice of the Mikado, that dignitary conferred upon the little Chinese rat-catcher the rank of honorary admiral in the Japanese navy.

And it was in this way that a heathen nation furnished the youngest naval hero in existence.

The Little Brown Mole.

BY CLARICE IRENE CLINGHAN.

THREE years ago, while spending a few weeks in New York, I was invited to the home of Paul Fancourt, the famous naval architect, whose family residence is on the shore of the Hudson, and but a short distance from the city.

I found my old college friend, whom I had not seen for several years, busily engaged with a set of drawings; but, notwithstanding his enthusiasm in his work, he looked worn, haggard, and unhappy. On the afternoon of the last day of my visit I pinned him down to a serious talk, in the course of which I begged him not to undermine his health by too close application to his favorite pursuit.

With a flitting smile he exclaimed: "Why, it's all that keeps me alive!" After a moment's thought he added: "Of late years I have been weighed down by the memory of a dark spot in my life — an unwritten chapter — until at times it seems as though I must make a confidant of some one."

Upon my assurance that I would be a most willing listener, he related the following history:

"Twelve years ago," he said, "when I was twenty-three, I met a singularly handsome girl, a débutante enjoying the triumphs of her first season. It does not speak well for the good sense of either of us, but I am compelled to admit that within six weeks we had met, loved, married, quarreled, and separated.

"The trouble between us was incompatibility of temper. This sounds insignificant, but there was certainly an enormous lot of incompatibility and much temper! We were very unhappy — at least, I was. We both said things that could never be forgiven or forgotten. Before the honeymoon was over I left my wife in this house, with a corps of servants and a handsome balance at my banker's, and started on a trip around the world.

"I was absent five years. During that time there was no communication between my wife and myself, although I frequently heard of her through correspondence with friends. Her conduct during my absence was most exemplary. She remained in the place where I left her, but gave up society. She studied art, making much progress, and I was informed that her pictures and illustrations were selling for extravagant sums. She seemed to have struck a popular art note and was playing upon it.

"These bits of information neither entertained nor amused me. Indeed, I thought myself beyond the point where anything she might say or do could interest me. Not that I had learned to care for any one else, but simply because our short association had utterly destroyed my early boyish affection. Before I had been absent a year her very image seemed effaced from my memory.

"On my arrival in New York, however, I was irritated to learn that not a penny of the money I had left at her disposal had been touched. I believed she had done this for the purpose of annoying me and causing me to look mean in the eyes of the world,—she, meanwhile, earning her livelihood by her art. Being abundantly able, I wished to make a settlement upon her; but, as she absolutely refused to talk with the lawyer I sent to her, I was compelled, repugnant as the idea was, to seek a personal interview. To this end I telegraphed Mrs. Fancourt on the third morning after my arrival, asking if she would receive me at five o'clock that afternoon on an urgent business matter.

"In less than an hour the reply reached me. I tore open the envelope and read the one word which comprised the answer, standing alone, naked of punctuation, on the yellow sheet: 'Come.'

"'That means war to the knife,' I thought, tossing the paper on my dressing-table. 'No words wasted.'

"As I made preparations for the trip I caught myself glancing at the letter now and then. '*Come!*' After all, it had a certain charm of its own, that word. Like all affirmative expressions, it possessed drawing power. The more I looked at it, the more alluring it appeared. Then I examined the signature. It was simply 'Leila.' Really, it was almost coaxing.

"Arriving in this village just at nightfall, I hurried towards

the house which had been the scene of so much unhappiness. To my surprise, it gleamed with lights, as if for some festivity. As I sprang up the steps and laid my hand upon the bell the door was suddenly opened by a maid-servant whose face was strange to me.

"'Where is madame — Mrs. Fancourt?' I asked.

"'In the drawing-room, sir,' she answered, and then discreetly disappeared.

"As you know, the drawing-room in this house is connected with the front hall by an arch, hung with portières. These were drawn. Pushing them aside, I entered, and suddenly found myself in the warm glow of a big wood fire which had been lighted in the fireplace. This crackling, cheery blaze and the waning light of the October day were all that lighted the room. There in the center she stood, clad in an exquisite gown of palest yellow, and, as I moved towards her, I saw two hands, instead of one, outstretched. The next moment I was holding them both, the cool, soft fingers clinging to mine while she whispered: 'Paul!'

"For a few seconds we looked at each other silently, breathlessly; then, obeying that irresistible law that causes the needle to be drawn towards the magnet, I bent and kissed her.

"All this took place as I have described it; but it would be impossible for me to account for the feelings that actuated me. I know only that all my bitterness towards my wife, all my dislike for her, in one revulsion of mind changed to the most passionate admiration and affection from the instant her lips touched mine. Dazed, astonished, I could not find voice to speak, but Leila chatted quite naturally as she led me to a big armchair on one side of the fireplace, while she threw herself on a low divan piled with cushions on the other side, putting out a slim little yellow-slippered foot to the blaze.

"'It's such a sorry day that I ordered this big fire, so your home would seem pleasant after your long absence,' said she, in her mellow, vibrating voice. Then, looking at me across the fire, with a winning smile, she added: 'Besides, it was so good of you to come out to see me.'

"I looked at her, still amazed. I now saw that she was much

changed. Perhaps she was not so handsome as she had been in her early womanhood; but what she had gained more than made up for that which she had lost. She was thinner; her face had grown ethereal, luminous, spirituelle. Surely, she had suffered, this fiery, savage-tempered girl, for the hardness and selfishness had melted away from her face and left it softened, lovely, and changefully brilliant. At first I thought her eyes were darker; but I soon made up my mind that it was because the pupils were so dilated. Then I knew she, too, was under the tension of strong nervous excitement. Her manner, however, gave no suggestion of this. She talked rapidly and almost continually, saying, apparently, whatever first came into her mind.

"'I suppose it seems frightfully dull to be here again. The merry-go-round has stopped, and here you are at the place from which you started. The curtain has dropped, has it not, dear? You've been everywhere and seen so much; and now everything is at a standstill and you feel a bit giddy from sudden lack of motion. It's much the same with me, only my merry-go-round isn't so merry and not so far around. I've just rotated between here and the New York art schools, and lived very quietly. But I believe I'm doing all the talking. Would you like to say anything — just a little word? Well, I won't let you, for I know two things. You are tired, and no man feels like talking before he has dined. So not a word until after dinner.'

"In the dining-room another surprise awaited me. A miniature banquet had been prepared, evidently in my honor, for I was the only guest. The room was adorned with palms and vines, and the table was gracefully decorated with roses and ferns, among which gleamed the silver and china. Over all was the soft, almost moonlight effect of wax tapers. The only objection I could make to anything was the flowers on the table, which partially concealed the face which I was now hungry to look upon. It was what I believe is termed the Celtic type of beauty, quite common among Anglo-Saxons, — dark brown hair approaching black, gray eyes, and a complexion of creamy fairness.

"We were long at dinner, talking of everything but the subject I came to introduce. I became reminiscent of travel; she was easily entertained and was herself brilliant, serious, and

amusing in turn. As we walked back to the drawing-room at the close of the meal, I whispered, like a lover:

"'Leila, I came to scoff, but I remain to pray. Can you forget the past?'

"She promptly put her hand over my mouth. 'The past must remain a sealed book,' she commanded.

"And so it did.

"In the hour that followed, spent before the open fire, I inadvertently referred more than once to the forbidden subject. But each time I was stopped by a warning gesture and an impressive, 'Remember, not a word. We begin life anew from this hour.'

"With every moment my desire for a reconciliation grew stronger. But when at length she yielded, it was only on two conditions: first, that I would never refer to the past; and, second, that our future be consecrated by a ceremony of marriage.

"I readily agreed to the first condition and took the solemn vow required; but at the second stipulation I laughed. But she said, very seriously, that she could be reconciled to me under no other circumstances. So, yielding to her whim, I ordered a carriage and we drove to the house of an elderly clergyman in the village whom we well knew, who, on hearing our story, willingly agreed to repeat the ceremony; and, lightly, almost laughingly, the words of five years before were once more said.

"Then followed five months of the most absolute happiness that was ever accorded, it seemed to me, to human beings. It was an atmosphere of love, joy, and ineffable content. The beauty of my wife, her changed nature, and fine intuitions grew upon me day by day. There never was, I am sure, a woman like her. I lived in her love; and yet I lost it forever on account of a thing of such infinitesimal importance that it drives me nearly mad to think of it. This object was no more nor less than a little brown mole on my wife's neck, just below her left ear.

"It came about in the following manner: One day, having returned from the city on an earlier train than I had anticipated, I went to Leila's room and found her lying on a couch, fast asleep, her hands clasped behind her head, and one slippered foot crossed over the other — in fact, the posture in which Du Maurier's famous Duchess was wont to 'dream true.' Knowing she was a

sound sleeper it occurred to me to softly kiss the little brown mole to which I have just referred — something I had not thought of since the days of our first short honeymoon so long ago.

"Carefully I pushed aside the masses of tumbled hair that lay across her soft white throat, and bent over her. No — the other side — but, surely — what did it mean? Her round neck of infantile whiteness and smoothness lay before me, *but the little beauty spot was missing!* Nor was there the slightest evidence that it had ever existed.

"I went downstairs and smoked a pipe on the piazza to think over this mystery. But the longer I thought, the less I understood it.

"That evening I said to my wife: 'Sweetheart, where is the little brown mole that was just under your left ear?'

"For a moment she looked at me; then she said softly, but with a certain power in her voice: 'Have you forgotten your vow?'

"I stared a moment; then recalled my promise never to allude to the past. Somehow, it impressed me differently now than when I had first taken it. To be sure, I laughingly begged Leila's pardon, assuring her there would be no more lapses from rectitude in that direction. But from that moment a strange restlessness took possession of me. I felt something impending. In the morning I would wake with a singular sense of oppression, which when traced to its cause always arrived at the same starting-point, — the little brown mole which should have been on my wife's soft white throat, but was not.

"It was about this time that I noticed that there was not a likeness of Leila in the whole house. When I went away there were many scattered about,— water-color sketches, paintings in oil, photographs, and etchings, for Leila had always been proud of her beauty. Now not one remained; even the oil-painting that had been finished, as companion to mine, just after our first marriage, had been removed, though mine hung in its accustomed place. I was about to call attention to this fact and ask the reason, when I remembered that this circumstance, also, belonged to the past, concerning which I had promised never to question, and was silent.

"My mind had now become so perturbed that it continually

demanded something on which to focus its attention. For this reason, I turned my thoughts to my favorite pursuit,— naval architecture,— which had been neglected for months. Before my trip abroad I had left in a sandal-wood box in the library some unfinished plans, which I now decided to complete. But as the box was missing and the servants knew nothing of its whereabouts, I climbed to the attic to look for it myself.

"After an hour spent in a fruitless search I was turning to leave, when my eye fell upon a large picture lying on its face among a heap of papers in the darkest corner. I knew the frame, and the first glance at the picture told me I had happened on what I was not looking for, but had wished for,— a portrait of my wife. It was the one that had been painted directly after our marriage.

"Dragging it from its hiding-place, I carried it to the long, low window, and, propping it up against an old dressing-table in a position that would catch a good light, I carefully wiped off the dust and cobwebs and stood back to view it.

"As I looked I became as a man stricken with death! The face on the canvas was not the face of the woman I loved and worshiped as my wife!

"How long I stood benumbed by this discovery I do not know. After the first shock lessened and my senses began to act, I fell to studying the portrait and comparing it with its living double.

"That there was a remarkable resemblance between the two it is unnecessary to say; but at the same time there were so many points of difference that I was amazed that I could have been so easily deceived. There was, in fact, what might be termed a 'family' resemblance such as often exists between two sisters, who, when together, are not thought to be remarkably alike, but when seen apart are often mistaken for one another. In the picture the ears were larger, the mouth smaller, the chin less decided, the forehead a trifle narrower, and the eyebrows heavier.

"While I stood revolving in my mind this terrible mystery I heard the sound of hurried footsteps. My wife had returned from her afternoon walk. I went downstairs, arriving in the lower hall just as she entered. She came sweeping in with her usual vivacity, her eyes bright, a faint rose tint on her cheeks, enveloped in

that atmosphere of exhilaration that was like a breath of ozone, and which gave her a charm above ordinary women.

"Something in my appearance must have startled her, for she paused at sight of me and waited for me to approach. I went to her, kissed her, and then, clasping her gloved wrists in mine, looked steadfastly at her and said, 'Dear, where is Leila?'

"In a moment her brilliant color faded. Her eyes fell. Then, suddenly wrenching herself free from me, she moved unsteadily towards the staircase, pausing with her hand on the banister only long enough to say, 'You have broken your pledge. Leave me alone until to-morrow. Then you shall know everything.'

Then I heard the sound of her garments on the stairs, presently the closing of her door, and the key turning in the lock.

"All that night I restlessly walked the floor of my room, trying to bring order out of the chaos of my mind. Fear, love, trust, suspicion, all by turns possessed me; but in the end my belief in the goodness of the woman I loved conquered. At early dawn I knocked at my wife's door. There was no response. I tried the knob; it yielded and I entered. There was a dim light in the room; but she was gone. On her dressing-table was a letter which told me all.

"The first few paragraphs are sacred to me alone. I will begin her letter where she commenced her own history.

"'My name,' she wrote, 'is Olive Berkeley. I was born in England, the only child of a retired naval officer. My father had a moderate fortune, and for eighteen years I lived a quiet, carefree life in a Devonshire country-house. During my nineteenth year my father's income was so much reduced by unlucky investments that we moved to London that I might study art, with a view to supporting myself. Two years later my father, who was my only near relative, died suddenly, leaving me less than a hundred pounds clear of debt. By this time, however, I felt confident of success in my profession, and, thinking America offered a better field than England for a self-supporting woman, I came to New York. Here I took a studio with the intention of giving lessons in drawing and painting.

"'But the pupils did not come; my pictures failed to catch the popular fancy; my money was soon spent. Overwork and worry

culminated in illness, and I soon found myself deeply in debt without a friend in the world to whom I could apply for aid. In this extremity I accepted the first work I could obtain — a situation as companion to Mrs. Paul Fancourt.

"'This woman, whose violent temper and moody disposition had driven her husband to foreign countries before the honeymoon was over, was the terror of her household. She, I believe, took a dislike to me from the first on account of a singular resemblance between us, and also because she saw I was her equal by birth and education. At any rate, she delighted in humiliating me in every way, as well as in making my duties as laborious as possible. I hated to touch a morsel of food under her roof, but my unmet obligations made it impossible for me to resign my position, as I did not know where else I could obtain remunerative work, and I had a horror of debt. But, though I outwardly kept my temper, a volcano of hurt pride and misery burned within me.

"'One Wednesday night I went to my room more than usually worn and enraged by Mrs. Fancourt's caprices. It had been one of her stormiest days, culminating in the discharge of her butler, and the bitterest invectives against the other servants. I had just retired, and had hardly fallen asleep, when the bell over my head rang violently. Springing up, I slipped on a dressing-gown and went downstairs. Mrs. Fancourt was sitting in an easy-chair reading a novel. The hands of the clock on the mantel pointed to eleven. Without looking at me, she motioned to a table not three yards away, saying insolently, "Bring me that paper-knife."

"'"Never," I answered passionately.

"'With this she rose and came towards me, striking me full in the face with the paper-covered novel in her hand.

"'Then it was as if all my pent-up self-control snapped. I sprang toward her, seized her by the shoulders, shook her until my strength was spent, and flung her from me.

"'She fell heavily, striking her temple upon a sharp corner of the fender, where she lay quite still. I hurried forward and spoke to her. There was no response and I lifted her face to the firelight. To my horror I found that she was dead.

"'And what was to become of me? I had killed her in a fit of passion, I could not deny, though it was by accident. How could I prove my innocence? I was without friends or money. When my debts were brought to light, might not theft and the fear of discovery be advanced as the motive for the crime? If not the scaffold, I saw, at least, prison bars before me.

"'Instinctively looking around for something to wrap about me, I caught up a satin-lined garment of Mrs. Fancourt, and, slipping it on, rang the bell. Wishing to spare the one who answered it a shock, I met the housekeeper in the hall.

"'"What is it, Mrs. Fancourt?" asked the woman very respectfully, evidently mistaking me for her mistress.

"'In that instant there flashed into my half-crazed brain the wild idea that I might personify Mrs. Fancourt for the time being. The death of the poor, unknown English girl could be of little moment, while the announcement of the death of Mrs. Fancourt would cause much more comment.

"'With this idea, I told the housekeeper to come to me in half an hour; then, with the courage of desperation, I clothed the dead body in one of my dresses, arrayed myself in one of Mrs. Fancourt's gowns, darkened my eyebrows to simulate hers, and let my hair fall about my face in confusion.

"'Meantime, I had determined to insure myself against detection by the three remaining servants by getting rid of them at once, a plan rendered all the easier by the fact that it simply carried out Mrs. Fancourt's mood of the day. In fact, it had been her custom to vent her feelings by discharging her entire corps of servants in a body and with no warning; and their comings and goings caused not the slightest comment.

"'The scheme succeeded to perfection. The other servants, terrified by the catastrophe, gladly left the house at once, especially as each was provided with two weeks' wages in advance. Mrs. Fancourt's only sister and near relative was traveling in Europe; her husband was at the antipodes. Of course there was a coroner's inquest; but, as nothing was proven to the contrary, a verdict of death by accident was brought in. The whole matter passed off very quietly; few outside the household knew that Mrs. Fancourt had an English companion or that she

had died. Those who did thought it very kind of Mrs. Fancourt to give the companion burial in her own family lot.

"'Then I fell sick, and for weeks raved with brain fever. When I recovered I was but the ghost of my former self, and friends of the dead woman who came to call after my recovery said they never would have known me.

"'As soon as I was able I devoted myself to art, which now, by a freak of fortune, brought me large returns. I not only paid the debts of my "deceased English companion," but supported myself comfortably without touching the fund left at the disposal of Mrs. Fancourt by her husband. That I never could have done. I should have been happy but for the grief I felt at having — though unwittingly — caused the death of another. There has never been a moment when I would not have willingly yielded up my life, could it have restored that of my victim. The fact that I usurped her name and position was due to a momentary cowardice. There was only one thing belonging to the dead woman that I coveted, and that was her husband! — and not even him until that night of nights when he came into my monotonous life and kissed me with that quiet air of ownership and dominion!

"'I had dreaded your coming, fearing you, above all others, would discover the fraud. And when your message reached me, and, on the impulse of the moment, I sent that fatal answer, "Come," it had hardly left my hand before I regretted it. For at once it flashed upon me how impossible it would be to account for all or to conceal all. But from the instant that you stood before me I was conquered by another feeling than that of dread,— I loved you. Love and not fear held me to the lie. And it was my respect for you and for myself that made me insist upon that marriage ceremony.

"'I always knew that should you discover the deceit I should leave you — not because I felt guilty of crime — for of that I have always felt morally innocent — but because I won and married you under false pretenses. I cannot bear to lose one iota of your respect and remain where I can miss it.'"

Here Paul Fancourt closed his story. I heard the high wind lashing the trees; darkness was growing dense; the early November evening was closing in.

"It was seven years ago to-night that I first met her in this house," went on Fancourt.

"Surely you have taken measures to find her?"

"I have done everything under heaven. Once in awhile I grow desperate and try everything over again. But it is useless. And yet I have a feeling that she will return, and that if she does it will be to this house. So I am just waiting here, waiting—

"Well, John?"

"A lady to see you, sir," said the butler at the door.

"Who is she?"

"I don't know, sir; she wouldn't give any name."

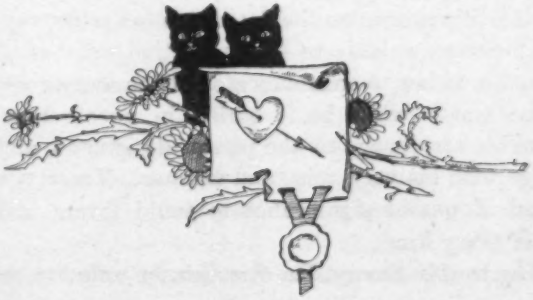
Fancourt rose and went towards the door; but before he reached it his visitor pushed past the servant and stood,—a tall, veiled figure in black,—clutching nervously at the drapery at the door. Then she threw back her veil. I caught a glimpse of a marvelous face and hair sprinkled with snow about the temples, of two dark, beautiful eyes fixed on Paul.

"I—I couldn't stay away—any longer," she whispered huskily.

Fancourt rushed towards her with an inarticulate cry. Then, with hands outstretched, "My wife," he gasped, "I—"

But what followed I shall never know; for the next moment I had retreated into the library, where for half an hour I sat diligently reading a book held upside down.

What I do know, however, is this: All that I have told happened three years ago; and up to the present time Paul Fancourt's third experiment in matrimony has proved a triumphant success.



A Telepathic Wooing.

BY JAMES BUCKHAM.

DR. AMSDEN was utterly and hopelessly in love with beautiful Miriam Foote. But, in spite of his six feet of splendid manhood — or, perhaps, because of them—the young doctor was so timid in the presence of the fair sex, and particularly in the presence of the fascinating Miriam, that he could no more bring himself to utter a syllable of sentiment to that young woman than he could walk up to the venerable and dignified president of the State Medical Association and tweak his nose! The two things seemed equally preposterous and impossible.

At this juncture of affairs, curiously enough, there fell into the hands of Dr. Amsden a book that offered a magical solution of the problem that perplexed him,— viz., how to make love to the woman who had ensnared his heart, without being conscious of doing it. This book was called "The Law of Psychic Phenomena," and its central theory was that the "subjective mind," or soul, of any person, by a process of auto-suggestion, may enter into communication with the subjective mind of another person, at any distance whatsoever. A condition of sleep, either cataleptic or natural, is induced by the agent in himself; but previously to falling to sleep he must concentrate his whole mental energy and will-power upon the determination to convey a certain image, or message, or both to the subjective mind of the person with whom he wishes to communicate. Then away goes his spirit — his phantasm — while he is buried in unconscious slumber, appears in his very image to the person designated, and delivers the message with his very voice and manner. Truly, a marvelous theory, and of untold significance to timid lovers and bashful solicitors of every kind.

According to this theory, Dr. Amsden, in order to make tele-

pathic love to Miriam Foote, need simply drop to sleep, on a certain night, with a strong determination to send his phantasm to the young woman with an eloquent plea of affection. That was all. It was not even necessary for him to furnish the general substance, introduction, or any portion of this glowing address. He need simply specify that it should be passionate and rich in verbal color, — ordering a proposal much as he would a dinner at a first-class hotel, with perfect confidence that at the proper time it would be served in proper form. To be sure, this method of wooing was not in strict accordance with the traditional etiquette of such affairs. It might even be considered that this proposal by a sort of phantasmal proxy was hardly fair to the object of the experiment. A ghost is, after all, but a ghost, whether it be attached to a bodily tenement or be simply a spirit at large, and even the most heavenly minded young woman might cherish a prejudice in favor of a fleshly lover. On the other hand, however, the choice lay not between two methods of wooing, but between this and none at all; and how easy, how delightful a method of making a proposal of marriage. It could all be performed, like a painful surgical operation, during merciful sleep. Then the lover when next he met the lady in his every-day person would know by her manner whether she had accepted or rejected him. The more Dr. Amsden considered this fascinating project the more trivial seemed his scruples against its fulfilment. Indeed, he asked himself judicially, was it not a fundamental doctrine of metaphysics that only the soul was real, and so-called matter was simply the shadow cast by the spirit? This being the case, his vulgarly named ghost was in reality no ghost at all, while his bodily presence was the real phantasm.

Having arrived at this comfortable, though to the lay mind slightly abstruse, conclusion, Amsden wavered no longer. "I will do it," he said, jumping to his feet. "I will do it to-night — or — no, a few days must be given to subduing the flesh and concentrating the energies of the subjective mind. On Saturday evening, at the time of my regular weekly call, I will make an end to this painful uncertainty. Though I cannot but hope that she looks upon my suit with favor, I shall never dare to broach the subject of love openly in the flesh. My ghost — or, at least,

what is vulgarly known as a ghost — shall speak, and I will abide by the result."

On his return from dinner that evening Dr. Amsden locked all the doors and darkened all the windows of his apartments. Then, after smoking a meditative cigar, he went to bed. It was barely eight o'clock in the evening when his head touched the pillow, but, as he had planned to send his image to Miss Foote at precisely nine o'clock, before that young lady should have retired to her chamber, he wished to have ample time to get himself to sleep. Besides, he was really tired and drowsy, which was certainly a favorable condition for his experiment. He had feared that he would be excited and nervous; but already the suggestion of sleep which he had been constantly reiterating for the past hour was beginning to tell upon his brain. The formula, "I am about to go to sleep, I am becoming sleepy, I sleep," was having a most magical effect.

Dr. Amsdem dropped into the misty chasm of slumber in less than fifteen minutes after getting to bed. But that fifteen minutes had been spent in strenuous command, on the part of the objective mind, that the subjective mind should go, at precisely nine o'clock, to the home of Miss Foote, present itself in the exact and correct image of the lover, and make an ardent appeal to the affections of the lady.

In about two hours Amsden awoke, bathed in perspiration, and feeling thoroughly exhausted. He was not conscious of having dreamed at all, and yet it seemed to him as if he had just shaken off a most horrible nightmare. He arose, lit the gas, and consulted his watch. It was just ten o'clock. "Thank heaven," he cried, "I did not wake before the time!" He went back to bed, and fell instantly into the deep slumber of complete exhaustion, from which he did not wake until late the next morning.

For two days he did not see Miss Foote. Then he summoned up courage to call upon her. She came downstairs looking pale and anxious, and the moment that Amsden's eyes fell upon her his heart began to throb with suffocating violence. Undoubtedly his experiment had succeeded as far as the proposal was concerned — but should his attitude be that of the accepted or rejected lover?

Hardly noticing his stammering expressions of solicitude for

her altered looks, Miriam led the way into the drawing-room, and, motioning him to a chair, seated herself in a dim corner at the other side of the room. Then, with her blue eyes lowered and her fingers twisting nervously, she said: —

"Dr. Amsden, I owe you an apology. When you called two nights ago and asked me to be your wife I was too much agitated to answer you. To tell the truth," she continued, reddening a little, "the eloquence of your words, their poetry and melody, so surprised and overcame me that I could not answer as you deserved. When I left you and walked to the other side of the room it was only that I might gain possession of myself, and when I looked up and found you gone —"

"Gone!" exclaimed Amsden, groaning audibly.

"Yes, gone like a spirit (here Miss Foote paused, while Amsden clutched at his chair, feeling as though his whole body were turning to sand and dribbling down upon the floor) without a word of good-bye, I feared that I had mortally offended you and that you would never come back to —"

"Then you were not angry because my ghost — because I left like a ghost? You wanted me to come back? But why?"

"I — I think you ought to know," said the girl, blushing.

And the next moment Dr. Amsden was kneeling at her feet.

"I did it in a dream — no, I don't mean that — I mean this is a dream. I ought to explain."

"No, don't try. I understand," said Miriam softly.

The girl's head sank forward on his shoulder. She was crying a little, but she suffered her lover's arms to slip around her waist, and into his trembling hand she pressed her own.

It was done, the impossible, the inconceivable! And even Amsden felt in his heaving heart that he had never done anything so easy and so utterly delightful in his whole life.

It was true that Miram did not understand, but Amsden felt that at such a juncture any explanations would be not merely out of place, but even indelicate.

To his credit be it said, however, that on one occasion before his marriage he attempted to confess to Miriam all the circumstances of his proposal; but while he was still struggling with his introduction she stopped him with a peremptory gesture.

"I don't understand a word about subjective and objective minds," she said, in a wounded voice. "All I know is that you made me the most beautiful proposal I had ever heard — I mean imagined — but of course if you want to take it back by saying that you were not responsible at the time — "

Whereupon Amsden was obliged to consume two delightful hours in assuring his sweetheart that he was a blundering fool, and that his metaphysical nonsense, translated, meant that it was his best self that had made that eloquent proposal, and that he was only afraid his every-day self was not one tenth good enough for her.

The Prince Ward.

BY CLAUDE M. GIRARDEAU.

HE hospital was almost finished, but, as there were several wards still unendowed, the board of managers gave a reception. Ostensibly, to enable a curious public to inspect the building; in reality, to obtain benefactions. Among the visitors was a Mr. Prince, a Southerner, and reputed wealthy. He seemed greatly interested in the hospital, and selected for endowment a single ward on the second floor, department of surgery. It was at once completed at his expense and christened with his name.

Its first occupant was his wife. She looked like a dying woman to the superintendent, but he entered her case on the new books without comment, and she was examined by the surgeons in charge. They advised an immediate operation as the only hope — and that a slight one — of saving her life. In fact, they knew she could not recover either with or without it; but the operation would be an interesting one.

"I did not think I was so ill," said Mrs. Prince pathetically, as the nurse took her back to her room.

"Guess she hasn't looked in a glass lately," was the attendant's unspoken comment.

"She looks for all the world like a starved cat," she said to another nurse, later on, "with her big green eyes and her black hair. Won't I have a sweet time combing all that hair? It's about two yards long. She's more hair than anything else."

The morning of the operation found Mrs. Prince cold with nervous terror.

"Do you think I will suffer much?" she inquired of the nurse tremulously.

"Oh, no, indeed," replied that functionary, with professional cheerfulness, plaiting away at the endless lengths of hair. "If I was you, I'd have about half of this cut off."

Mrs. Prince looked at the long, heavy plaits, then up at the nurse, her gray eyes darkening.

"If you cannot take care of it," she said quietly, "I will tell the superintendent to send me another woman."

The nurse colored.

"Oh, I don't mind," she said awkwardly.

When the toilet of the condemned was completed Mr. Prince came in with a huge handful of roses, smiling genially as his eyes fell on his wife.

"Why, P'tite, you look like John Chinaman in that funny shirt."

She smiled in return, but wanly.

"I suppose I do look absurd." She held out her arms; he filled them with the roses, and sat down by the narrow bed. She turned aside her head to hide the sudden tears. He drew her plaits of hair from neck to heel and bent to kiss her cheek as the doctors came in to administer ether.

"Madame Kanaris is here," he said softly, "and begs to see you. May she come in?"

"Madame Kanaris!" She stared up at him with dilating eyes. "When did she come to B—? What is she doing here?"

"The nurse said I might come in for one little moment," said an exquisitely melodious voice at the door directly facing the sick woman.

The men all looked up. A woman, young, beautiful as the day, stood on the threshold, her tender deep blue eyes fixed upon the patient with an expression of the liveliest emotion.

Her radiant hair, her dazzling complexion, her superb figure enveloped in furs, and the indescribable grace of her attitude made the sick woman appear grotesquely skeleton-like and ghastly.

It was Life confronting Death. Death raised itself upon an emaciated arm, and spoke to Life: —

"I cannot see you now, madame. The physicians have just come in, as you see. I beg that you will go away."

Prince sprang to his feet and approached the visitor.

"I did not know the physicians would be here," he murmured. "Shall I take you downstairs? Will you wait for me in the parlors?"

While he was speaking to Madame Kanaris his wife motioned to a surgeon. "I am ready. But, O doctor, are you sure it will make me quite dead? Are you sure I shall not be just iced over, with a frightful consciousness underneath? Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," said the surgeon pityingly, stealing a glance at the figures in the doorway. "You will be blotted out of existence during the operation. Do not be afraid."

He took her cold hand into a warm, compassionate palm. In a few seconds she was carried past her husband and Madame Kanaris, who were still talking in the corridor.

Prince was startled as the procession of doctors and nurses came out of the room.

His companion glanced at them, and her brilliant color faded.

"Do not leave me," she gasped, holding him by the arm. "Take me away. I should not have come."

Prince hesitated. The stretcher was being carried into the elevator. He turned to the beautiful, agitated woman beside him, drew her hand through his arm, and they went downstairs together.

The operation was long, difficult, and dangerous, taxing both nerve and skill. The operating-room was very hot. One of the nurses fainted, and a young doctor, sick at heart and stomach, helped her away, glad to get out himself.

The operating surgeon, a keen, self-possessed practitioner, looked at the patient when all was over, with a deep breath of relief.

"The very worst case of its kind I ever saw," he remarked to a colleague. "It will be a miracle if she recovers, although I would give one of my ears to make it possible."

After three days of delirium and torture the woman died.

It was the twenty-eighth day of February.

Madame Kanaris came into the ward alone, and stood for a few moments looking down at the face on the narrow pillow.

"She could never have recovered in any event?" she said questioningly to the nurse.

"I don't see how she could," was the calm reply.

Madame put out a flashing hand.

"May I see?" she said with delicate curiosity.

The nurse lifted a layer of batting.

The beautiful visitor gave a cry of dismay and clapped the hand to her face.

"I thought it would make you sick," said the nurse quietly. "I guess you had better go to the window."

Madame stood with her lace handkerchief pressed to her lips and gazed upon the ice and snow without.

Presently she said: —

"Mr. Prince desires the hair of his wife. Will you kindly cut off the plaits close to the head."

"It does seem a pity," observed the nurse, snipping at the plaits stolidly, "to take the only thing from her she seemed to care much about. I guess they can bury my hair with me."

"She is not to be buried," replied madame softly, still gazing upon the whiteness without. "It would be a pity to burn such splendid hair, would it not?"

"Oh!" said the nurse, "I see. Going to send her to the new crematory?"

"Are you a New Englander?" gently inquired the lady, turning her dark blue eyes upon the inquisitive attendant.

"I guess I am. Why?"

"I have always heard that New Englanders asked a great many questions."

The nurse colored and snapped the scissors vigorously through the last strands of hair. The thick, short locks stuck out stiffly behind the dead woman's ears. The nurse held out the snakelike braids to Madame Kanaris, who drew back a little.

"Please put them in this box for me," she said quickly. "Mr. Prince will send for it."

In leaving the room she touched the dead forehead lightly with a finger, crossed herself, and murmured something in a strange tongue.

"Catholic, I guess," sniffed the nurse, watching her as she went down the corridor, with that mingling of envy and unwilling admiration that the beautiful Greek always succeeded in implanting in the bosoms of her less-favored sisters.

In a few days' time Prince and Madame Kanaris returned to the hospital with a picture they desired hung in the ward. It

might have been an idealized portrait of Mrs. Prince, — the face of a saint against a background of sunset, or the head of a martyr dark against flame, as the imagination of the beholder should suggest.

The frame was oval with an inscription below the head. It was also heavy, of plaited bronze, with a boxlike backing. It was the work of a finished artist, however, and, being idealized, the portrait was beautiful. It was hung above the bed, as the other wall spaces were occupied with cheerful landscapes.

Madame Kanaris laid a loose bunch of pomegranate flowers on the pillow beneath it, and she and Prince left B—— the next day — as they thought — forever.

. . . . . .

The new hospital was a popular one, but for some reason the Prince Ward remained vacant. There was nothing mysterious about this; it had been bespoken many times for patients, but a change of mind would occur so naturally that at first nothing was thought of it. In a year or so, however, the continued vacancy began to be a subject of remark among the nurses. But they were too busy and too practical to regard it in any other light than that of a provoking pecuniary loss to the establishment.

One night in January the night nurse of the second floor, at one end of which was the Prince Ward, sat drowsily waiting for medicine periods or the sound of bells from the various rooms.

It was the last night of her watch, and she was worn out from a month's sleeplessness.

Toward midnight the tinkle of a bell roused her. She went from door to door trying to place it. As she neared the Prince Ward it sounded again.

She paused at the door.

"Very strange," she thought; "surely there is no one in here?"

But to make sure she went in. The room was icy cold.

A low moan came from the narrow bed.

"Water!" murmured a voice inarticulately. "Water!"

"Wait until I turn on the light," said the nurse, going towards the chimney-place. She stepped on something, tripped, would

have fallen; caught at the bed and grasped a long thick rope of hair. She lifted it and laid it alongside the figure it evidently belonged to.

"Water, water!" moaned the inarticulate voice again, close to her ear. The nurse went out, much puzzled, and returned with a glass. Two icy hands touched hers as she held it to the lips.

"How cold you are!" she exclaimed, "and this room is like a frozen — frozen tomb," she added. "You must get warm."

"No, no!" said the voice, ending in a low, wailing moan.

The nurse looked curiously down at the face on the pillow. Scarcely anything was visible but two large dark eyes and two immensely long snake-like plaits of hair.

"Did you come in to-night? Are you waiting for an operation?" asked the perplexed nurse.

"Yes." The voice was inarticulate again.

"How strange the day nurse or the head nurse did not tell me. I don't know what to make of it, at all. You are sure you do not want any light or heat?"

The reply was so inarticulate that she bent down to listen. A faint odor turned her quite sick. She went out hastily into the corridor, leaving the door ajar. She was worried; nay, more, she was conscious of a feeling a trained nurse has no excuse for. She had a crawly sensation along her spine.

"I must be dreaming," she said to herself angrily.

She went back to her chair and table, and, in spite of heaviness and sleepiness, listened for the bells with a qualm of absolute fright whenever the sound came from the end of the corridor.

At last, just before daybreak, the bell she was straining her ears for, rang again.

She plunged her head into cold water, took a glass in her hand, and approached the Prince Ward. For a second she paused at the door; a wild impulse to dash down the glass of water and rush shrieking through the corridor almost overpowered her for a heart-beat. Then her training reasserted itself; she smiled satirically in her own face and went in, leaving, nevertheless, the door wide open behind her. She paused beside the bed.

"Thirsty again? I have brought some water for you."

She slid a hand to lift the head. She bent over the pillow with a steady glass.

The bed was empty. It was not even made up. There were no sheets on it, no pillow-slip.

The room was like a frozen tomb. The glass dropped from her hand, deluging the mattress with its contents.

She rushed from the room. Fortunately, her felt slippers made no sound. The door swung to noiselessly behind her. She fled up the corridor, and flattened her back against the wall at its furthest end, shaking as with a mortal chill.

There she remained until the gray light of a snowy day crept through the window at her side.

When the day nurse, rosy and refreshed, came to relieve her, she said, eying the night nurse a little curiously:

"I guess you'd better tumble into bed as soon as you can, Miss Evans. You look as if your month's work had about finished you."

The nurse whose turn came next was the one who had been with Mrs. Prince. The last night of her watch was the twenty-seventh of February. She had had an unusually hard month's work, and was exceedingly tired and not a little cross when, at midnight, a bell rang which she could not locate.

"Some plaguey wire out of gear again," she said, provoked, after a second fruitless search for the elusive tinkle. She had turned at the end of the corridor, and stood just by the Prince Ward. The bell rang sharply.

"Well, I want to know!" she said aloud. "If it isn't in this ward!"

She went in immediately and would have turned on the light, when she was stopped by a curiously familiar, though indistinct, voice.

"Water — water!"

"For the land's sake," ejaculated the Down-Easter, going toward the bed. "What's this?"

Her foot slipped on something; she tripped and came near falling. She stooped and lifted from the floor a long, heavy plait of black hair. She stood stupidly, holding it in her hands, staring down at the bed.

"If I was you," she said mechanically, "I'd have about half of this cut off."

Two large dark eyes stared up at her.

"Why!" she stammered, too stupid to know when she was frightened, too trained a nurse to understand, "Why, you died!"

A low laugh echoed in the room.

"How cold you are in here," the nurse went on. "What will you have?"

"Water," said the thick voice inarticulately.

The nurse went out. As she closed the door behind her she was seized with a sudden cold shaking.

She went to the room of the head nurse and woke her.

"Say, Mrs. Waxe, who's the patient in the Prince Ward? Why wasn't I told about her?" Mrs. Waxe was wide awake instantly.

"Prince Ward? There's nobody in the Prince Ward, Miss Hall."

"Yes, there is, too. I've just seen her and spoke to her. Seems to me I've seen the woman before. But the one I knew died after the operation."

"What?" asked Mrs. Waxe keenly. She had been in the hospital only six months, but she was a personal friend of Miss Evans. "Who was she?" Miss Hall gave a brief account of the case.

"What was her name?" inquired Mrs. Waxe, sitting up, large and alert.

"Why, it was Prince," said the night nurse. "She was the wife of the man who endowed the ward."

Mrs. Waxe gazed for a moment into the stolid face before her.

"I think you have had a dream," she said calmly.

"I don't sleep on duty, whatever the others may do," retorted Miss Hall.

Mrs. Waxe lumbered out of bed, untying her cap strings.

"Go back to the floor," she said quietly. "I'll be coming to you after a bit."

She dressed quickly and presently waddled into the corridor.

"Now, you go and get to sleep in my room, Miss Hall, and I'll be taking your place to-night."

The hospital was filled to overflowing with grippe cases. The epidemic was raging in the city, and the Prince Ward was the only vacant spot in the place. Its defective register had prevented its use. It could be but insufficiently heated from the fireplace.

Mrs. Waxe went to it at once and turned on the electric light. She then stripped the bed of everything except the springs, carried the small table to the other side of the room, put out the light, took up the hand bell, and locked the door as she went out.

She then sat down at the table in the corridor, opened a Bible, and began to read.

She had read perhaps fifteen minutes when a bell tinkled. Her long experience enabled her to locate it almost immediately. She went to the ward adjoining the Prince.

No; the patient there had not rung for her, but was awake and sure the bell next her on the right was the one. It had rung before.

The Prince Ward was on the right. As Mrs. Waxe stepped into the corridor the bell sounded again.

It was in the Prince Ward. The Englishwoman was convinced that an ugly trick was being played.

Thoroughly indignant, she unlocked the door and stepped within. A low moaning and a peculiar unpleasant odor arrested her progress towards the electric button. The first turned her ruddiness pale; the second made her sick. Her foot slipped; she stumbled, twisted her ankle, and, being a heavy woman, she fell on her knees, catching at the bed-rail. A hand crept upon her shoulder, striking cold through her gingham dress.

"Water!" breathed a hoarse voice at her ear inarticulately. "Water!"

In spite of the strained ankle, the head nurse got upon her feet. She staggered out of the room, followed by the moaning cry of "Water — water."

She shut the door behind her and crept along the corridor, holding to the wall; then called one of the private nurses and bade her light up the Prince Ward. The woman did so, remained in the room a few moments, then came back leisurely.

"Well?" said Mrs. Waxe.

"Well," returned the nurse, "I opened the window. Did not know the ward had been used lately. Pretty bad case, wasn't it?"

"Bad case?" repeated Mrs. Waxe, a light shining through her nostrils to her brain. "Yes; perhaps."

"Perhaps?" repeated the private nurse satirically. "I guess I ought to know by this time. I should say there hadn't been much left of that case to put under ground."

She went back to her case, wondering at the stupidity of the English generally and in particular.

Mrs. Waxe put her aching foot into hot water and meditated.

. . . . . .

The twenty-eighth of February dawned dark, for a blizzard from the northwest was blowing. It was the worst storm of the last half of the century.

Men were lost and frozen to death in the streets while going from their business houses to their homes.

A lady attempting to alight from a carriage at one of the railroad stations, in order to make an outgoing train, slipped, or was blown down upon the icy pavement. She was taken up insensible and carried to the nearest hospital.

"I do not think we have even a corner vacant," said the superintendent; "but of course she cannot leave the building now."

She sent for Mrs. Waxe.

"The Prince Ward is unoccupied?"

The head nurse glanced at the stretcher and hesitated.

"Yes; but it is next to impossible to heat it, you know, doctor."

"Do the best you can," replied the superintendent. "The woman should have been taken to the Emergency, but you see what the weather is."

Mrs. Waxe divested the traveler of her velvet and furs, her lace and linen, the bag of diamonds secreted in her bosom, her long perfumed gloves, her silk underwear, her jeweled garters and hairpins. She left nothing on her but the black pearls in her ears and the magnificent rings on her fingers; then slipped a hospital shirt on her fair body, and tucked her shining curls into a cap. The fall had fractured the bone of one leg and several ribs.

The ward surgeon, entering, started at the sight of the beautiful face on the narrow pillow. Instantly the scene of two years before renewed its living colors on the sensitive film of memory. He even recalled the name of the woman before him, so deeply had that scene and her beauty impressed him.

"It is Madame Kanaris," he said.

The patient opened her dark blue eyes.

"I am Mrs. Prince," she corrected; "I wish to send a telegram to New York at once."

She turned white; fainted again. The broken bones were attended to with expedition.

Before night the telegram was sent. There had been some delay of letters, some misunderstanding that had sent Mrs. Prince to B—— by mistake.

That lady's brilliant eyes examined her surroundings.

"I am in the —— Hospital, in the Prince Ward?" she said presently.

"Yes," said Mrs. Waxe, disturbed by the coincidence of names.

"I selected the fittings and furniture for it," Mrs. Prince went on softly. "But I did not think, at the time, of myself." She looked at the picture above the bed.

"You must have that picture taken down for me, Mrs. Waxe. I do not like to have anything 'hanging over me,' even if it is the counterfeit presentment of a saint."

An ugly sneer disfigured her delicate lips for a moment.

"I will have it taken down as soon as possible," said the head nurse; "but it cannot be done immediately, my dear. We have sent out all the nurses we can spare, and extra beds have been put in nearly every ward. I am too heavy to risk myself on a ladder, but I will see the superintendent about it after a bit. It is well fastened up, I assure you."

Towards night, not hearing from Mr. Prince, madame grew nervous, then feverish.

In a sick-bed for the first time in her life, strapped immovably to its narrow confines, her head beginning to throb with agony, she lay suffocating with impatience, suspense, and apprehension, she, — the spoiled darling of every good fortune.

The raging storm shrieked unceasingly about the House of Pain like a legion of infernal spirits.

There were so many others more critically ill than herself, and the number of nurses was so reduced, that she was of necessity left alone much of the time.

Just before midnight Mrs. Waxe came in, weary, but the embodiment of strength and kindness.

"I think," she said coaxingly, "you must try and get to sleep. I shall give you something to quiet you, and then turn off the light, and I hope you will soon drop off. I shall be near you in the corridor. If you want anything just tinkle the bell. Close to hand, you see, my dear."

She administered a draught, straightened the pillow, then bent down impulsively and kissed the lovely, disquieted face maternally. Two beautiful arms closed about her ample neck, and the patient was sobbing on her generous bosom.

"Come, come, you must be brave. They did not want me to tell you, but a telegram came half an hour since for you. Your husband will be here sometime toward morning. Will you go to sleep now, like a good child? Ah! I thought so."

She turned off the light and went out, leaving the door half open. After making the round of the corridor she dropped into a chair. Her head fell forward on the table before her. In all her experience as a nurse she had never done such a thing before, — she fell asleep at her post.

She was roused by the sharp, continued ringing of a bell. She sat up, dazed, rubbing her eyes.

The superintendent, the resident physician, and a stranger were coming up the wide staircase. The bell had never ceased its imperious, insistent summons.

Without stopping to think, the head nurse ran, ponderously but swiftly, to the Prince Ward. As she stepped within the threshold the bell suddenly ceased, but the air was vibrating. She ran to the mantelpiece, reached up, and turned on the light.

The three men were at the door, the fur-clad stranger, a tall and handsome apparition, carrying a huge handful of roses. They all stared at the figure of the head nurse.

Petrified in position, her fingers on the key of the electric

bulb, she stood with her usually florid face, now paper white, turned over her shoulder, her starting eyes fixed upon the bed.

Mr. Prince entered quickly, then drew back with a loud cry of fear and horror. The roses fell from his hands upon the edge of the bed and over the floor.

The heavy picture had dropped like a stone from its anchor in the cornice. Its edge had struck the sick woman on breast and forehead, but it had fallen painting upward. From beneath it uncoiled on either side two immensely long, ropelike plaits of black hair, between which the painted face smiled upon the white faces by the bedside.

The superintendent was the first to recover his wits. He sprang forward, lifted the picture, wondering at its weight. As he did so, the back, loosened by the fall, fell to pieces; a heavy bronze jar rolled from the face on the pillow, scattering a thin, fine, dust-like ashes that powdered the luxuriant curls, and floated above the stiff, strapped figure in a fine, impalpable cloud.

Then the ashes settled slowly upon the lifeless body, upon the scattered roses on the floor, and upon the splendid furs of the man who shrank against the wall and put up his hands against the dreadful sight.

A Meeting of Royalty.

BY MARGARET DODGE.

IT was not according to the schedule that the special train, consisting of a locomotive, an empty baggage car, and the regally equipped private car, Priscilla, should stop for three quarters of an hour at Mayville Junction. Indeed, in his instructions, the Great Man who was the car's sole occupant had provided for a wait of only five minutes. It is a matter of record, however, that for forty-five minutes the official train waited at the lonesome little station on the Indiana prairie. What happened in those forty-five minutes is now for the first time given to the public.

After the Great Man — who was no other than the president of the A. M. & P. Trunk Line, which joins the Atlantic Ocean with the Great Lakes — after the Great Man had taken a perfunctory turn about the little station and had asked a few stereotyped questions of the station agent, he went back to his seat in the Priscilla's white-and-gold drawing-room, and sat down to a game of solitaire. Being a very young president — not over forty — the Great Man was not specially fond of solitaire. But he was still less fond of the thoughts engendered by a two weeks' solitary tour of inspection through the flat, drab, malarial country of the middle West. After prolonging his luncheon to the latest possible hour, and extracting all the comfort to be obtained from a single mild cigar, he found himself longing to exchange his gold-and-white grandeur for even the plebeian red velvet of a day coach, where he could observe the vagaries of country bridal couples, and invite the confidence of smudgy small boys with prize packages of magenta lozenges.

It was while the Great Man was indulging in these vain visions, much to the detriment of his success at solitaire, that he

was startled by these words, spoken in a shrill little voice, apparently just at his back:

"If you please, sir, are you the king?"

The moment that elapsed before the Great Man could whirl about in the direction of the voice was long enough for several detached bits of "Alice in Wonderland" to flit through his brain. What he saw, however, when faced around, was simply a very solemn, very pale little girl who stood with one thin hand on the door knob, and one small scarlet-stockinged leg well advanced, while her hazel eyes gleamed at him anxiously from under a fuzzy brown hat.

"Really," said the Great Man, good humoredly, "I don't know — why, yes, now that you speak of it — I suppose I am a sort of king. At least, I believe newspapers call me a railroad king. Won't you come here and sit down?"

The small girl shut the door and slid to his side in a gait that combined a hop and a glide. "I suppose it isn't just the thing to sit down in — in the presence of royalty," she said, as she perched on the edge of a big tapestry-cushioned Turkish chair. "But, you see, I am a princess myself — a fairy princess," — she added, with an emphatic shake of her fluffy yellow locks.

"Indeed." The "Alice in Wonderland" memories suddenly revived. "That's very interesting, and I don't like to doubt the word of a lady. But all the fairy princesses of my acquaintance have had wings and spangles, and carried star-tipped wands — and — and all that," concluded the Great Man vaguely.

"But that was because you saw them during the performance," said the small girl, clasping her thin little fingers over one scarlet-stockinged knee. "I wear wings and spangles and carry a wand myself, in the evenings, and at the Wednesday and Saturday matinées. I'm the Princess Iris," she explained, "in the Golden Crown Opera Company; and if I wore my fairy clothes all the time my wings would fade and the spangles would wear off.

"But you know," said the small girl, "you don't look a bit like the kings of my acquaintance. They all wear gilt crowns and velvet and ermine robes, and carry scepters. And, besides, you are a great deal too young."

The Great Man laughed. "I am afraid you have me there; at least, I mean, I suppose you are right," said he, leaning back in his chair and regarding the Princess Iris with twinkling eyes. "I don't look my part. But, then, I am not performing now myself. We are in the same boat — that is —"

"Oh, you needn't bother to explain," said the small girl, "I understand slang. Only I don't talk it myself, now, except when I forget, because the Queen doesn't like it."

"So there is a queen, too, is there?" said the Great Man, the merry lines around his blue eyes growing deeper. "Dear me, we shall soon have the entire royal family."

"Yes, there is a queen, and she is not to be laughed at," said the child gravely. "In fact, it's partly about her I've come. I— I wanted an audience."

"Well, really," said the man nervously, "I should like to accommodate you, but"— looking at his watch — "my train leaves in about one minute, and I don't see exactly how I can."

"Oh, my!" said the small girl, "can't you even make your own train wait while a princess talks to you?"

"Well, since you put it that way, I suppose I can," said the Great Man, pressing an electric button. Then, as the black porter appeared, listened deferentially to his whispered order and glided out again. the royal personage continued:

"Very likely I don't get half the fun out of being a king that I might. You see, I sometimes forget the extent of my power."

"Ah! yes, that's the very thing I've come to speak to you about," said the child. "I — I hope you will excuse me if I hurt your feelings," she went on gently, "but sometimes it's necessary, you know."

Upon her hearer's assurance that he would endeavor to bear up under censure, the small girl continued:

"It's like this: I s'pose you've such a big kingdom you don't get a chance to straighten out all the things that go wrong."

"And something has gone wrong, now, has it?"

"Yes, as wrong as can be. But," reassuringly, "of course I understand you couldn't have known about it. It's the train to Washita. It was put down on the time-table, you know, to go at four this afternoon, and we all came down to the station to get it.

And now they say it may be two hours before it arrives; so, instead of getting to Washita at half-past six, it will be long after nine, and we'll be too late to give our performance. And that will be a very d-r-eadful loss to the Queen."

"How's that?" said the Great Man. "One night can't make very much difference."

"Oh, but this is Saturday night, and the whole house was sold long ago. Washita's the best show town in the State, you know, and the Queen was counting on the money.

"You see, it's been a dreadfully poor season in the profession, and even the Queen has lost heaps. And just now when she found out we'd be late, her face got all white, and she hung onto my hand, oh, so hard, and said —"

Here the child stopped suddenly and, digging her little fists into the chair, blinked very fast and caught her breath. Then,

"It quite upsets me to think of it," she said in a muffled little voice. "The Queen said that she was afraid that the company would have to disband now, and the season's hardly begun."

Two great tears rolled down the white little face.

The man stirred uneasily. There was a deep line between his eyebrows.

"That is hard luck!" he exclaimed. "But, then," with an affected hardihood, "after all she's only a play queen, you know, and I presume she's — well — roughed it before. Anyway, you'll probably all find nice engagements soon, and be just as well off as you are now."

"How can you say that?" the child flashed out. "Of course we can't be so happy with any one else. There never was any one half so sweet, and kind, and beautiful as she is. And we all love her dearly. And, besides, if the rest are make-believes, she isn't; she is a real queen all the time!"

The child had risen. Her shabby hat had fallen to the floor and her big hazel eyes blazed angrily out of her pale little face. The next moment, with a shame-faced lowering of her head, she slid nearer to the Great Man's side.

"I — you must excuse me if I hurt your feelings," she said humbly. "The Queen wouldn't like it if she thought I'd done

that, and on her account, too; but, you see, I really couldn't bear to have her called a make-believe. And now," she continued, "I think I'll go back to the station. My auntie and the Queen will be wondering where I am."

"Wait a minute," said the man, drawing the child to his side. "I want to know more about this real Queen. You know they say all the royal families are connected, and she may be a relative of mine."

"No, she isn't," said the small girl, leaning a little shyly against the royal shoulder; "because she told me once that she had no relations left since her father died. You see, she used to live in a big palace in New York in the winter and a stone castle in Newport in the summer, and she had horses, and carriages, and diamonds, and — and all those things. But she wasn't a queen because she had them, you know, but they belonged to her because she was a queen.

"Well, one day her father died, and they found he'd lost all his money, and some that belonged to other people besides, so the Queen had to go on the stage and get some money to take care of herself and to pay back what he — he borrowed, you know. And that was four years ago, and now she's paid back all Mr. Denbigh's debts except two thousand dollars —"

"Mr. Denbigh!"

"Why, what's the matter?" said the child half turning. "Ain't you feeling well? Your arm trembles so."

"Oh, yes; quite well. Only I felt so sorry for your Queen."

"I knew you would," said the child enthusiastically. "Well, as I told you, she paid it all back except just that two thousand dollars, and this season she expected to finish it. And that made her so happy, because she doesn't like being a make-believe queen, and it was only on her father's account she did it."

"You're sure it was only that? She didn't care to be famous, after all?" said the Great Man, clutching the tiny hand hard.

"Why, how queer your voice sounds," said the little girl in a motherly tone. "I'm sure you can't be feeling well or you wouldn't say such things. I should think that being a king yourself you'd know that when a person's been a real queen once she wouldn't care about being a make-believe one."

"But that's just like men; they never do understand. Now there was one that the Queen knew. She told me just a little about him one day when things seemed very make-believey to her. She put it in a kind of story, you know, but I liked her so much I knew who it was about.

"Do you know, he thought just what you did, because she wouldn't marry him instead of going off for what he called a — a 'career'? And he'd known her ever since she was a little girl, too, and ought to have known better, oughtn't he?"

"Yes," said the Great Man huskily, "I suppose he ought. But you see the Queen didn't tell him about — about the money she was paying back. And she was a great deal younger than he, and beautiful, with a voice that people said would make her famous, and he thought that she really cared more to be a stage queen than anything else.

"Tell me, dear, has she still the ring that he gave her when she was a little girl?"

"The teenty little forget-me-not ring that she wears on a chain and often kis— But — how did you know?" stammered the child, twisting around and staring up into his face. "I never told you the rest, and your eyes are so strange —"

But the Great Man had risen and was striding rapidly up and down the car. "And Alice really cared for me — she cares for me still," he murmured. "While I, who ought to have stood by her have only hindered her. And now she needs help, and I with all my money haven't the right to help her. It's too late — I can never make up for the time I've lost —"

"I hope you don't mind," said the small girl who stood as if petrified just where he had left her; "but you spoke so loud I couldn't help hearing the last. And if you mean the train to Washita, it isn't too late. If you could get it here in fifteen minutes — and I s'pose that's easy, for a king — we could give the performance, even if the curtain did ring up late."

"Train to Washita," murmured the Great Man — "Why, yes; of course! How stupid of me," as he pressed the electric button. "Let's see, how many are there of you?"

"Twenty-two now," said the child, "but I don't quite —"

"And you haven't had the best of fare in the hotels?"